




# Exhibit F

## Professors behind conservative-backed “Liberty Institute” say UT has strayed from plan

Emails obtained via an open records request show two professors who helped develop the new center believe UT-Austin President Jay Hartzell backed off a plan to bring “intellectual diversity” to campus.

BY **KATE MCGEE** JUNE 8, 2022 5 AM CENTRAL

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University of Texas professors involved with the proposal for a think tank tentatively called the Liberty Institute say UT President Jay Hartzell “defaulted on the plan” after faculty pushback. The school had received \$6 million in the state budget to launch it.   
Allie Goulding/The Texas Tribune

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University of Texas at Austin finance professor Richard Lowery was emailing with a colleague in London last November when he was asked if it was true that the so-called Liberty Institute “failed to launch.”

Six months prior, UT-Austin had received \$6 million in the state budget to launch a new think tank “dedicated to the study and teaching of individual liberty, limited government, private enterprise and free markets,” known as the Liberty Institute.

The project had hit some roadblocks after [The Texas Tribune](#) reported that the university was working with conservative donors and politicians to launch the center, sparking concerns among some students and faculty that the Legislature was “politicizing” the university.

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Lowery replied that the failure-to-launch rumor was “100% accurate.”

“We’re in the Weekend-at-Bernie’s phase of the Liberty Institute life cycle,” he wrote, referring to the 1989 movie about two coworkers pretending their murdered boss is still alive to continue their weekend vacation.

New emails obtained by the Tribune via open records requests show that multiple faculty members who were heavily involved with the center’s genesis are frustrated with the direction it has taken since last fall. Those professors, Lowery and Carlos Carvalho, say they are unhappy with the hiring process and worry about what they view as a lack of independence from the liberal-leaning faculty as a whole. And they accuse UT-Austin President Jay Hartzell and Richard Flores, deputy to the president for academic strategies, of backing off the agreed-upon proposal developed with Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick and conservative donors.

on free inquiry and academic freedom at UT-Austin,” Lowery said in an emailed statement.

UT-Austin did not respond to requests for comment or to a list of emailed questions Tuesday.

Carvalho told the Tribune that he wrote a draft proposal for the center that the Tribune obtained from Patrick’s office last summer, and said that version was written “in cooperation with the president’s office.”

“A growing proportion of our population lacks a basic understanding of the role liberty and private enterprise play in their well-being,” that proposal read. “Too many Americans, particularly younger students, maintain misconceptions about our political system and lack an even basic understanding of the moral, ethical, philosophical and historical foundations underpinning a free society.”

In that proposal, the center would be managed by a board of overseers of “alumni and friends” who would manage donations and help the UT-Austin president approve the center’s leadership. A separate board of scholars appointed by that board of overseers would advise on faculty hiring.

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Some faculty expressed concerns that the university was setting a negative precedent by forming an institute born out of political motivations and legislative connections. For Carvalho, those concerns have negatively changed the original efforts.

“I believe the current implementation is far from the original plan and from what we presented the [Legislature] as a proposal,” Carvalho said to the Tribune in an email answering written questions. “The change of direction started after the original Texas Tribune article came out last fall.”

The frustration appears to be shared by the lieutenant governor. During a speech at a conservative think tank's policy event earlier this year, Patrick said he was supportive of the institute after donors approached him, but said UT-Austin faculty "shot it down" because they wanted to have control of hiring.

"Well that's the whole point," Patrick said to the crowd. "We don't want to hire you guys."

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### **More wealthy conservative donors involved**

In faculty council meetings and on its website, the university has insisted the center — which they originally called The Liberty Institute until they were notified they could not legally call it that name — would help support and attract faculty. And university officials have given no public sign that their vision has changed.

On a web page about the program last updated in January, the university states that it hopes to support three to five new members of faculty "with teaching interests in philosophical bases for decision making and choice, government regulation, legal and policy impacts on economic outcomes and individual choice and freedoms, market design and social welfare, and social prosperity and well-being, including innovation, entrepreneurial activities, company formation and job creation."

Faculty and students have criticized the administration for a lack of transparency beyond these details. University leaders have answered very few questions about their vision, repeating that it is still in planning stages and many decisions have not yet been made. On that same website, the university said the new center will be modeled after the Hoover Institution at Stanford University and a center at Oxford University.

While the Tribune had previously reported that wealthy, conservative UT-Austin donors Bill Holmes, Bob Rowling and Bud Brigham had been involved with the project, emails sent to and from Carvalho's university email account show that GOP megadonor and Dallas billionaire Harlan Crow was also helping Carvalho and others develop the center.

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In June 2021, Crow reached out to Princeton University professor Robert George, director of the James Madison Program in American Ideals and Institutions, to see if he could advise UT-Austin as it launched the institute, pushing for a center that runs independently of the university, which many donors characterize as a school controlled by liberal academics.

"I'm hoping that Jay [Hartzell] might want Robbie as an adviser in setting this up," Crow wrote to Carvalho and others in July 2021 saying Hartzell and George had a phone call set up to discuss the center. "Robbie agrees that this UT program must have a lot of independence from the forces of the left. He believes the left will relentlessly try to emasculate and destroy our effort."

According to Crow, George said it would be hard if the center was located in an existing school and "to get the best talent UT will need to honestly promise that it would move into an independent unit status." George did not respond to a request for comment.

Crow told the Tribune he became involved in the efforts to launch the Liberty Institute because he is a donor to the Salem Center for Policy, which Carvalho runs. He said he was not closely involved in the day-to-day progress of the center and could not comment on its current status. But he said he supported the idea of countering "leftist advocacy" on the university campus.

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“Anything you can do to restore balance with the university, not a political point of view, but intellectual and moral balance, seems to be a good thing,” he said.

While private donors repeatedly emphasized the importance of independence, Hartzell said in faculty council meetings during the semester that other centers on campus do not hire independently.

“This institute or center, or whatever [it] ends up being named, is going to conform with the way we run centers and institutes at the University of Texas at Austin,” he said at a March faculty council meeting. “Centers and institutes don’t, for example, appoint tenured faculty.”

In an April article in The Texan, Carvalho said independence of hiring is paramount.

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“There’s one thing, one key provision that makes or breaks this institution,” he said. “The provision is the independence of hiring.”

## Disagreements over hiring

In the beginning of the fall semester, Carvalho expressed frustration in emails that the Liberty Institute was facing pushback.

At one point in early October, Crow sent him an email telling him he was thinking about him.

“I completely realize that this has been a roller-coaster year for you, more for you than anybody. I know it has been hard, and I know it is hard right now,” Crow said. “Of course, I don’t know how this Liberty Institute will turn out. I don’t even know if it will happen. My main priority is that it will happen. If it happens and if it is possible for you to have a meaningful role in it, that would be terrific.”

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Around that time, Hartzell invited Carvalho to be on a steering committee on a new philosophy, politics and economics program. The committee was asked to help develop the program’s vision and create a wish list of faculty to possibly hire. In the email, Hartzell said this new program would be supported by an institute, “what you have probably heard of as the ‘Liberty Institute.’”

“This institute will provide the resources to attract top scholars, to provide new opportunities for our students, and to offer increased intellectual diversity and breadth to campus,” Hartzell wrote.

A subset of the committee would focus on launching the institute, including hiring, finding the director and deciding its name.

Carvalho agreed to participate. But five months later, he wrote to two UT-Austin professors and said he had withdrawn from the committee because he disagreed with the university’s hiring process for the executive director.

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“I am not at all supportive of the appointment that Jay Hartzell is trying to push,” he wrote. “When I sat out to write the proposal for the Liberty Institute I was aiming to build a high quality place with Hoover as the inspiration model.”

He added that he had conversations with professors from the University of Chicago and Columbia University about the effort.

“What we are getting instead, is a mediocre attempt to appease external pressure,” he said.

UT-Austin professor John Gerring responded that he “share[s] his sentiment.” He declined to comment further to the Tribune.

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In late March, UT-Austin business professor Brian Roberts mentioned in an email to Carvalho that the university was bringing University of Missouri professor Justin Dyer to interview for the position. Dyer, who holds a doctorate from UT-Austin, is a self-described “pro-life evangelical.”



“Justin is a good guy, but I don’t think he has the needed prominence to make this institution a reality,” Carvalho said. “I am also very disappointed by the lack of a proper national search for a director. We could have done a lot better!! Jay Hartzell likes people he can control, not top scholars!”

Roberts responded that he was in agreement about Dyer.

“His name came up very early, so somebody had their eye on him,” Roberts wrote.

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Dyer did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

In mid-April, Daniel Brinks, chair of the government department, confirmed that the executive committee of the government department voted that Dyer met the requirements for tenure in the department, which is one of multiple steps in the university’s hiring process. It’s unclear where Dyer is in the hiring process.

The university posted the job description on its website in January. Carvalho told the Tribune a hire of this level would usually involve a search firm and a large group of candidates.

“Obviously not the case here,” he wrote. “In addition, the proposal to the [Legislature] called for an external faculty advisory board (again, of leading scholars) to be formed to advise the university on this hire. Yet another item in the proposal the president decided not to pursue.”

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